

The NSC, the SecDef + the Pres

Rand Corporation.

I had just joined Rand permanently in July of 1959, having spent the summer of '58 there as a consultant. In the summer of '59 I chose as a focus of my research the command-control process for nuclear forces. This was a question which was coming to seem of increasing importance as people studied the process of the alerting of nuclear forces in the event of an oncoming nuclear attack and the implementation of an execute order by the President.

There was a need, of course, to familiarize ourselves with the planning for nuclear operations in the Pacific. Nuclear operations in particular are generally very closely guarded to a specific group of operations and command planners, people in J-3 and J-5 sections -- J-3 is operations and J-5 is plans -- who specialize in nuclear war planning. And since these are an elite of planners and operators the military secrets are very closely guarded; but, in particular, guarded even from civilian authority. At the same time, they are plans that are known to quite a large number of military individuals, since ultimately they go down to the level of pilot and carrier operators and base commanders. So that at any given date there is only a small fraction of all military and civilian officials who are aware of these plans, who have access to them, but if one looks world-wide the number of people who have access to one or more is a very large number, in the tens of thousands.

Also, at each level of authority there are a number of people who are aware of the plan at the next higher level which governs that plan of the subordinate commander. So even in a given theater one runs into hundreds of people who have a pretty good knowledge of the structure of plans relating to that theater. This includes a handful of civilians, mainly operations analysts, left over from World War II, who work at improving the operational details and work directly with the military. In effect, they are employees of the military. But aside from them, very

few civilians, and in particular civilian officials, know anything about these plans.

We asked on the study to have access to these plans and to various other documents within the CINCPAC command, and we were given this access. Since we were among the few people to work at the base on some of these, we asked and were given permission to have access to the Top Secret "cage" in the Plans Section of CINCPAC Headquarters so that we could work late at night and on Sundays, since they were not willing to let us sign these documents out to our offices. This cage entrance was literally a cage covered by heavy wire netting, guarded by a warrant officer and a guard who was a librarian. Inside, the cage, was the size of a small library room; had many shelves of documents and a filing system. In the course of reading the current plans I began to look up their references to various other documents and to become gradually aware of the structure of plans. I became interested in the subject, since it was obviously a little-studied area and thus one that offered every hope of improvement by a comprehensive look and analysis.

It turned out that CINCPAC got most of the JCS documents, which were sent routinely to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific, so that it was possible there to see plans that related to other theaters as well, and higher level plans. I compiled a list finally of several

hundred documents that looked of interest, and, in my efforts to educate myself on the Command and Control ~~minds~~ ^{personnel} of CINCPAC, ended up spending nights and weekends and days poring over these. They gave me essentially any document that I wanted to see and I saw them in a great variety of areas. In the course of several months I had what at that time might have been an unprecedented ability to read the files of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in particular the files of the Pacific.

In the course of doing this work, I learned from Dr. Ruth Davis, who was in charge of the computer studies for CINCPAC and all the computer development for CINCPAC, for the first time of a plan she said I should see, called the JSCP, pronounced "J-SCAP," on which the GEOP, CINCPAC General Emergency Operations Plan, was based. (JSCP = Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan). She told me that the Secretary

of Defense and the President - and I don't know how she knew this, but it turned out to be correct - did not know of the existence or the nature of the JSCP but that I definitely ought to see it to understand the character of the plans. ~~I'm almost sure that I did see it in the Pacific, because it was~~ ^{thus} armed with ~~that~~ knowledge, that I was able, in Washington, to ~~continue~~ to study the current and past JSCPs' and to discuss such matters with the planners in Washington, when my contact^s, colonels in the Plans Division of the Air Staff, realized how much I already knew.

Now, it turned out to be a fact that the JSCP, both the contents and the existence of the JSCP, had been kept from all previous presidents and Secretaries of Defense, ^{esp} ~~thus~~ civilian authorities. This seems almost unbelievable unless you knew the background of relationships between the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs. There was no Secretary of Defense until 1948-49, that was the time that the Department of Defense was created, and the responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense gradually evolved over the next decade. Before 1958 the Secretary of Defense and his Assistant Secretaries were seen essentially as functioning in certain non-operational areas, such as procurement, research and development, personnel, budget, and so forth, but not having either responsibilities or command powers in direct area of combat operations or plans. Thus, although a Secretary of Defense like Charles

Wilson, might be in on high level crisis decisions, as in the Quemoy Crisis of 1954 and 1958, he also might not be; in fact the record shows that he was sometimes present and sometimes wasn't, and it would depend on the personality and his relationship with the President. So, during this whole period, then, the Joint Chiefs had a basis for saying that the Secretary of Defense had no "need to know" operational war plans, since he was not involved in the operational command problem. But in 1958, the Reorganization Act of '58 put the Secretary of Defense directly in the chain-of-command, second to the President in the chain-of-command from the President to the unified and subordinate commanders.

It was President Eisenhower's desire to abolish the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He had no respect for them, having dealt with them as a theater commander himself, the supreme commander in Europe, but in particular he was disillusioned with their post-war performance. He wanted to abolish them, but they were preserved mainly by Congress, who wrote into the Acts that the Joint Chiefs should be the principle military advisors to the President. The Act did not put them in the chain-of-command, which went from the President to the Secretary of Defense and to the unified commanders, such as SACEUR and CINCPAC. The Secretary of Defense, however, who took office at that time was Neil McElroy, from Proctor and Gamble, who had no background in military

matters and who, though supposed to be a very intelligent man, put in an unusually short day because he had a sick wife. He was easy to manipulate by the Military. The Joint Chiefs came to McElroy and urged him to write a DOD directive which reinterpreted this Act, as follows: "The chain-of-command is from the President as Commander-In-Chief, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Unified Subordinate Commanders, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff," (italics added) implying that the Joint Chiefs would be, in some sense, a channel for his directives. They further got him to agree, as a practical matter, to allocate all operational responsibilities to them. In effect, the Act was circumvented; although it was on the books, it resulted in no real change of operating responsibilities in 1958 or 1959.

Secretary Gates, who succeeded McElroy under Eisenhower, had much stronger instincts to exercise control himself, but because all past practices kept him from knowing what it was that he needed to know and did not know, and where the levers of power really were in the Pentagon, he had almost no ability to do this. One aspect of this secrecy was that the JCS had formally adopted, in writing, a set of practices designed to keep the Secretary of Defense from ever asking any questions directly about their general war plans. The first protective device was to call the war plan the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, which did not betray to a layman that it had to do with nuclear war targeting, for the current year, in Russia, and other aspects of general war

planning. It was usually referred to by its initials JSCP, but there was a directive in writing by the Joint Chiefs of Staff that "the words 'Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan or the capital letters JSCP,'" were never to be allowed to appear in correspondence between the JCS and any agency of the office of the Secretary of Defense. If there was an absolute need to refer to such plans in some oblique fashion, reference was to be made to "capabilities planning" (lower case) which would, again, not suggest the existence of a specific plan or suggest that it was a war plan. Any JCS staff papers that used these initials or words, had to be retyped to eliminate all such references if they were to be referred to the Secretary of Defense.

The effect of this was that almost certainly no civilian, including the Secretary of Defense, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense was aware that there was a piece of paper of the character of the JSCP. What they did see, as, in effect, another attention-distracting device, was a plan called JSOP, or Joint Strategic Objectives Plan, which was a .. plan for budgetary procurement and R & D purposes which covered a five-year period starting four years in the future, so it covered the period from four to nine years off. It talked again of objectives, tasks, concepts, and area responsibilities as a basis for planning. This actually followed the current JSCP language, usually word for word - rather ironically, ^{since this implied} implying that objectives and tasks that far in the future could be regarded as identical with those

for the next twelve months - so the reader of the JSOP would have, without knowing it, a pretty close idea of the nature of our current war plan.

But that held only with certain, quite significant exceptions. For one thing, an annex to the JSCP (with no counterpart in the JSOP) was the SAC War Plan, the SIOP (Single Integrated Operations Plan) which laid out, in detail, the nature of our nuclear war operations. Throughout the Eisenhower period, and mainly for budgetary reasons, a strategy had been adopted that treated nuclear weapons as essentially "conventional", to be used wherever they were militarily efficient. Thus, not only was the general war plan entirely nuclear, but what they call limited war planning also relied heavily upon nuclear weapons, mainly shorter-range nuclear weapons such as the artillery and short-range weapons possessed by the Army and cruise missiles possessed by the Navy. A third category they called "cold war operations," which included subversive covert operations.

Now, a key question was the dividing line between the type of wars. In particular: When were the general war plans to be called into action? The JSOP provided no definition of general war that would give a hint as to when the general war plan was to apply. Such a definition did appear in the JSCP; in fact, this was perhaps the most "sensitive" piece of information in the JSCP, and the main reason for protecting the JSCP from the eyes of civilian authority.

The key to the definition in the JSCP was the fact that in the course of the inter-service rivalries that existed in the period when the military budget was, from their point of view, severely restricted by Eisenhower's concern with the possibility of national bankruptcy, the tactics of the budget battle between the Services had come to focus on the war plan and specifically on the definition of general war. The key budgetary question was regarded as being: How many divisions was the Army to be allowed to ask for in support of its mission? This, of course, depended on how its mission was specified. As the Air Force saw it, and with some basis, there was an almost unlimited amount of money that could be spent on Army divisions if they were to be allowed to match the number of Russian divisions. (This was especially true since, for somewhat different reasons, both American and NATO intelligence produced, for years, enormously inflated estimates of Soviet ground strength: for example, often ignoring the fact that the Russian division was less than half the size of an American division, so that a simple comparison of numbers of divisions gave very misleading notions of the balance of actual numerical forces, aside from differences in types of communications, tanks, fire-power, and many other aspects.)

Mexwell Taylor was the only one to reveal publicly the nature of this controversy and the budgetary focus on the planning, which he did with The Uncertain Trumpet,

his book which came out in the late 50's after his retirement as Chief of Staff of the Army. He described the JSOP, but even in that book he did not mention the JSCP. I don't remember when, if ever, that name came out in public. He did describe the controversy and pointed out that the battle had been fought and finally won by the Air Force on the issue of the definition of general war. He did not, however, mention that the definition did not appear in the JSOP (which was available to the Secretary of Defense and his civilian staff), and that it was stated only in current war plans stemming from the JSCP (plans which were not accessible to civilian authorities or staffs).

From a practical point of view, of course, the occurrence of general war was defined by the implementation of the JSCP general war plan. The question of when that would be implemented came to be determined by the definition. The definition, which appears only in the JSCP and in the subordinate documents like the war plans in the Pacific, was:

- "General War is defined as armed conflict with the Soviet Union."
- # That raises another practical problem: how armed conflict was to be defined or determined. Since there were occasional skirmishes in East Europe involving patrols and around Berlin, it was generally accepted that a platoon skirmish with Russian forces was not to be regarded as "armed conflict," for the purposes of JSCP. The controversy between SACEUR — Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, the Nato Commander (always

an American) and lower levels of the US Army in Europe came to be defined as to whether one regiment or two regiments were to be dividing lines for conflict with the Soviet Union. Needless to say, all gaming or planning involving Berlin Corridor Crises talked of confrontations starting with regiments but quickly going to the level of two to three divisions. It was essentially assumed by all that one to two divisions would, beyond doubt, meet the definition of the conditions for general war.

In practice, when they came close to actual confrontation in the Berlin Crisis - which, remember, was not really until 1961 - people did not imagine going to general war as soon as one or two divisions might be involved. But [✓] prior to 1961, no plans existed for war beyond the level of one and two divisions with the Soviet Union except the general war plans, based on the JSCP and the SIOP. Moreover no one was allowed to create any alternative plan, because of the intimacy of the relationship between the planning process and the budgetary process, which was the heart of military concern throughout this period. To have made a plan envisioning limited, non-nuclear operations against Soviet units involving more than a few divisions, would have been to admit that the Army had a potential role or responsibility for such a conflict; that would have given them a charter to go to their allies in Congress, with the "requirements" for such capability, which meant not only the

JSCP and the President

Although all of these disputes and their motivation were well known at the level of the Air Staff War Planners I was dealing with, there was essentially no public discussion of them at all. The one exception was a brief account in Maxwell Taylor's book The Uncertain Trumpet which he published in 1960 after his retirement as Chief of Staff of the Army. Since I cannot expect it to be easily credible that issues of such import could have taken the precise form I have described - let alone for the considerations I have mentioned - I will quote the corresponding passage of Taylor's account:

The concern over the snowballing of defense costs led to the next major conflict revolving around the military strategy. This clash occurred in the spring of 1956 in connection with the drafting by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the "Joint Strategic Objectives Plan" (JSOP 60) for Fiscal Year 1960. This is the midrange planning document which undertakes to estimate force requirements four years in advance. In the short time since the Ramey meeting, Admiral Radford had become convinced that it would be financially impossible to continue the military programs as planned and that the economies should be made at the expense of the conventional (nonatomic) forces. In particular, he was determined to eliminate from military planning any consideration of the possibility of a conventional war with the Soviet Union. The issue took the form of an argument over the definition of general war and the extent to which the armed forces should count on the use of atomic weapons. I proposed language which would recognize the possibility of some limitations on the use of atomic weapons, particularly in the initial stages of a conflict with the USSR, and the consequent need for conventional forces of significant size. Admiral Radford and the other Chiefs opposed this change, which, if accepted, would have justified greater expenditures for nonatomic forces. In the end, my view was overruled and the definition of general war established as a conflict in which the U.S. and USSR would be directly involved and in which atomic weapons would be used at the outset. The same decision authorized the armed forces to count on the use of atomic weapons not only from the outset of general war but also in situations short of general war when required by military considerations. In effect, these actions ruled out consideration of a conventional conflict of any sort with the USSR and weakened the case for conventionally armed forces in limited wars.

It should be noted that in Taylor's account of this dispute he describes the definition of general war as being determined in connection with the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP-60). If that is correct, it would imply that the definition of general war actually appeared in the JSOP in 1956, whereas it did not in later editions of this document (which was annually available to the civilian part of the Department of Defense). Actually, however, it is more likely that Taylor's account simply reflects his own continuation of the JCS' "cover and deception plan" concealing the very existence of a Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), since nowhere in this book does he refer to the JSCP. It may have been unprecedented, in 1960, for Taylor even to mention the JSOP in public print, but in the three places where he does (pages 22, 38 and 85-87), he describes the structure of planning in such a way that it would be appropriate to mention the JSCP as well yet he refrains from doing so, nor does he mention the JSCP at any other point in the book.

The significance of this point is twofold: a) It underlines the "sensitivity" of the JSCP, about which Taylor remained reticent in 1960 even while being unprecedently forthcoming about so much else; b) his reticence conceals from the reader the fact that as of 1959-1960 and later - and almost surely, in the 1956 period of which Taylor was writing - the nature of this dispute, its resolution in connection with the definition of general war, and the very document in which this resolution occurred, were all being deliberately kept from any civilian authority even within the Department of Defense.

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Thus, without the knowledge of civilian officials in the Department of Defense or the Commander in Chief in the White House, let alone Congress, the budgetary struggle among the services had led as early as 1956 to a highly restrictive definition of general war in the basic war plan which underlay annual war planning at all levels of command, such that the dividing line between "limited war" and all-out general nuclear war was drawn between the absence or presence of a significant number of Soviet troops in conflict with American or allied troops.

As a footnote to later events, I can't resist mentioning two incidents in Taylor's narrative following this passage. Taylor mentions, "One characteristic of this period was the effort of the Department of Defense and the State Department to keep secret the struggle which was going on within the Joint Chiefs of Staff over Massive Retaliation and related issues." (Page 43) The Army staff had written a paper entitled "The National Military Program." Although it was "an unclassified document," Taylor was blocked from writing an article presenting these views in Foreign Affairs. For varying reasons both the State Department and the Defense Department refused to clear the article for public release: Taylor finally, four years later, presents it as an appendix to his book: "It is of interest now primarily as an indication of the efforts at the time to conceal the existence of the deep schism in the JCS and the growing doubts about Massive Retaliation." Meanwhile, after the decision described above on the definition of general war; "with this victory to support his position, Admiral Radford in July 1956, led a major effort to cut the conventional forces and in particular the Army. He introduced into the JCS the most drastic proposal of the New Look, which if adopted would have caused a complete revision of our force structure in the next four years." (Page 39)

The Radford proposal would have cut Army deployments in Europe and Asia down to small atomic task forces, with the Army in the United States to be greatly reduced; fighting limited wars would be the task of Air and Naval forces, with the Marines doing the ground fighting. Taylor opposed this policy in a session of the JCS on July 9, 1956, as "an unacceptable military program for the United States," but he got no support from the other Chiefs and he left the meeting "feeling sure that the usual four-to-one split was about to be carried to the Secretary of Defense, where my case would be lost."

"That might well have resulted but for help from an unexpected quarter. On July 13, 1956, the New York Times carried an article by the late Anthony Leviero, its Washington correspondent, with the headline, "Radford Seeking 800,000 Man Cut." The article went on to describe with reasonable accuracy parts of the proposal which had just been considered in closed session by the Joint Chiefs

of Staff. It appeared that Leviero had either benefited from a deliberate leak of information or succeeded in putting together bits and pieces of facts gleaned from contacts with individuals who knew something about what was up. In any case, he had done a very shrewd job of guessing the nature of some of the events taking place in the highest military circles.

This so-called Radford leak created a tremendous hullabaloo in the Department of Defense, in Washington generally, and also had its repercussions abroad. An immediate investigation was started to try to determine the source. The investigation brought nothing to light to permit the identification or punishment of offenders, if such there were. Abroad, the leak was most disturbing to some of our allies. Chancellor Adenauer in particular was very much concerned about the reported proposal to reduce Army forces in Europe. He dispatched at once General Adolf Heusinger, Chief of the German Armed Forces, to discuss the matter with key Defense Department officials. In the meetings following his arrival in Washington, General Heusinger made a very eloquent argument for the indispensable nature of a strong ground shield in Europe as a part of the over-all strategic deterrent. Secretary Wilson assured him that no significant reduction in our European deployments was intended, so that he was able to return to Germany with a reassuring report for the Chancellor.

As a result of this publicity, Admiral Radford's proposal was withdrawn from the JCS and all copies of it in written form were recalled to the office of origin. The Critical danger to our overseas deployments and limited-war forces was laid for the moment. It was to reappear, however, a year later in slightly attenuated form in the Wilson-Radford program for the military forces in the period 1957 to 1961.

{After the publicity given to the nature of the leak process in the last few years, it may be left as an exercise to the reader to guess from what office, and by whose authority, the dastardly "deliberate leak" had issued}.